

Functional Skills

English

Level 2 Writing W6a

Ensure Written Work is Fit for Purpose and Audience,
with Accurate Spelling v1.0

Functional Skills English:

Level 2

Skill Standard:

Writing W6a

Coverage and Range:

'Ensure written work is fit for purpose and audience, with accurate spelling.'¹

'Learners should be able to spell accurately everyday and familiar technical words (those most commonly used in their work or studies) or be able to use reference materials to check their accuracy.'²

<https://www.gov.uk/rules-for-cyclists-59-to-82/overview-59-to-71> Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.

¹ Functional Skills Criteria for English, September 2011, Ofqual/11/4950

² QCA Functional Skills guidance: amplification of the standards June 2008 QCA/08/3700

Spelling

Having been developed from a variety of sources and expanded over many centuries, English spelling is a complicated business. (Even phonetic doesn't begin with an f!) The sheer wealth of influences, the lack of a dominant rule-making body, and the failure of all recent attempts at reform not only mean that nearly every sound can be spelled in multiple ways (**two, to, you, too, blue, shoe, through**), but also that identical combinations of letters can often be pronounced completely differently (**ough, cough, dough, through**).

Whilst it is necessary to therefore learn many irregular words off-by-heart, there are sufficient similarities and patterns to make many others easy enough to grasp.

Spelling words correctly is, of course, crucial to being a good writer. You will be assessed on your use of spelling throughout your exams and will gain more marks for using a wide and accurate vocabulary. It is important, therefore, that you proofread your work to check that the spellings you have used are correct. Using a broad range of words and phrases will also make your text more interesting to read.

Spelling Strategies

We all learn differently, but there are several spelling strategies which can help us learn those awkward words which are sometimes difficult to remember. Different people will find some strategies more useful than others. The most obvious one, though, is to keep reading, as the more you see words spelled correctly, the more they will stick in your memory. Others are below.

1) Spelling Bee

Available online is a bksb spelling quiz. There are seven levels covering various difficulties and word topics, and it can be played via desktops, tablets and mobile devices.

www.englishtest.bksblive.co.uk/spellinggame/

2) LACAWAC

Look and Cover and Write and Check. This is the traditional method for learning words which relies on your visual memory.

- Look carefully at the word's shape and length, the letters that make it up, and take a mental *photo* of it.
- As you *take the photo*, say the word to yourself.
- When you feel you have that mental image, cover the word up so you can't see it.
- Now try to write the word, remembering the way it looked, while saying it to yourself.

- Uncover the word and check it, letter for letter, against your attempt. If it wasn't correct, try again.

See if any of the words below are tricky for you to spell. If so, use LACAWAC to help you learn them. If not, try using a dictionary to find other words that you aren't as confident with.

according	ancient	conscious	embarrass
mischievous	millennium	nuisance	receive
sergeant	temperature	unfortunately	vehicle

3) Letter Strings

You can also learn words in groups which have the same letter strings. For example, almost all the words that end in *cian* are occupations:

optician	politician	musician
statistician	beautician	dietician
technician	electrician	physician

The benefit of this is that all the above have the same ending sound: *shun*. With very rare exceptions the same is also true for words ending in *tion*, as they are all nouns:

action	nation	oration	station
petition	ambition	education	condition
precaution	convention	subtraction	calculation

It is not so easy, however, to remember the spellings when the letters are the same but the sounds vary:

tough	bough	dough	borough
enough	though	bought	tough
cough	through	plough	ought

Some of this variation in pronunciation is due to the position that *ough* occupies in each word, but even when placed at the end there are multiple ways it can be said. Indeed, in standard English there are at least 10 ways to pronounce this combination of letters, plus additional irregular forms found in proper nouns. Such words must therefore be learned off-by-heart.

Exercise 1

These letter strings all make the same sound; however, they are all spelled differently. Add words under each example – the longer the word the better – but make sure they are right!

A Sounds (a, ai, ay, ei, ey, ea)		
shapely		

E Sounds (e, ee, ea, ie, ei, y)		
entry		

Er Sounds (er, ur, ir, or, ar, ear)		
surfboard		

4) Word Play

There are many variations here, one of which is to make each letter in the word you're trying to remember stand for a word in a memorable sentence (known as a *mnemonic*).

EIGHT	BECAUSE	RHYTHM	NECESSARY	GEOGRAPHY
Elephants In Garters Hate Tights	Big Elephants Can't Always Use Small Exits	Rhythm Helps Your Two Hips Move	Never Eat Crisps. Eat Salad Sandwiches And Remain Young	George Eliot's Old Grandmother Rode A Pig Home Yesterday

Alternatively, you could focus on the trickiest bit of a word and think of a hint to recall it, e.g.

Necessary contains one C and two Ss. It is *necessary* for a shirt to have 1 **c**ollar and 2 **s**leeves.

Robert really embarrassed **s**erious **S**usan. (Two Rs and two Ss)

There are two cots and two mattresses (two Cs and two Ms) in the **a**ccommodation.

Friend ends in **e**nd.

An **i**sland is *land* surrounded by water.

Don't believe a **l**ie.

There's a **r**at in *separate*.

Old Elephants **U**sually man**O**EUvre poorly.

Good Perso**N**NEL **N**ever **N**eed **E**vil **L**eaders.

Hear with your **e**ar.

Do not eat sweets on **W**ednesday.

i before **e** except after **c** or when the sound is **a** like neighbour and weigh.

Practise **i**s a verb, while **i**ce is a noun (**practi**ce).

For stationery, envelope starts with e. (That leaves stationary for objects which don't move.)

Other methods include memorable rhymes, with each letter said separately:

Mrs **D**, Mrs **I**, Mrs **F-F-I**, Mrs **C**, Mrs **U**, Mrs **L-T-Y**. (DIFFICULTY)

Mrs **B**, Mrs **E**, Mrs **A-U-T**, Mrs **I**, Mrs **F-U-L**. (BEAUTIFUL)

Possesses possesses five Ss.

Why not think of words you struggle with and see if you can come up with a form of word play which will help you remember the correct spelling?

Exercise 2

Below are a dozen ei/ie questions. Circle the correct spellings.

1. “(Pieces, Peices) of (eight, ieght)!” squawked the parrot.
2. Santa Claus’s (sliagh, sleigh) is drawn by nine (reindeer, riendeer).
3. I was (relieved, releived) when she got home safely.
4. The (chief, cheif) of police is very young.
5. The (thief, theif) progressed from (mischeif, mischief) to (deciet, deceit).
6. I (beleive, believe) that the (casheir, cashier) has the (reciept, receipt).
7. For (believers, beleivers), a (preist, priest) can help those in (grief, greif).
8. The (freight, frieght) train was (deisel, diesel) powered.
9. My (niece, neice) (shrieked, shreiked) when a mouse ate a (peice, piece) of her cake.
10. I (beleive, believe) that the (hygiene, hygeine) standard of the restaurant on the (pier, peir) is good.
11. Those (cieling, ceiling) (releifs, reliefs) are lovely.
12. The thick doors (shielded, sheilded) us from the fire until we were rescued.

5) Words Within Words

As the subheading suggests, this method involves breaking words down into shorter component parts and/or building them up from easy, small words into harder, longer ones:

mush + room = mushroom

them + selves = themselves

know + ledge = knowledge

to + get + her = together

men, mend, commend, recommend, recommended

point, pointed, appointed, disappointed, disappointedly

6) Notes!

If you have particular words that trip you up, you could try writing them on sticky notes and placing these all over your home. That way you’ll link the words with particular activities and hopefully find them more memorable.

7) Word Histories

Knowing the meanings behind the words we use can help you to spell them. Understanding base words, also known as *roots*, is really helpful in determining the spellings of the longer words they can help to create. *Faith*, for example, is from the Latin meaning *to trust*. If you therefore know what faith means and how it is spelled, you are half way to spelling words such as faithless, faithfully, unfaithful and so on. Equally, if you think of a **battalion** as a body of soldiers ready for **battle**, you will not have to wonder whether you should use double **t** or double **l**.

Exercise 3

How many associated words can you think of that are related to these roots?

Port (from the Latin, meaning *to carry*), e.g. teleport

Show (from the German, meaning *to look at*), e.g. showbusiness

Act (from the Latin, meaning *to do*), e.g. acting

8) Word Association

Using the words in bold as clues (and as the words to be kept in mind), complete the unfinished words. And remember, if you have any trouble you can always use a dictionary or spell checker, and/or speak to your tutor or another good speller about alternative strategies.

Exercise 4

- 1) The purpose of the _____nt is to **govern**.
- 2) A _____ic explosion fills one with **terror**.
- 3) A _____ry may have to deal with **secret** documents.
- 4) _____ne should be taken only on **medical** advice.
- 5) A _____te is a small **cigar**.
- 6) Inflammation of the _____al tubes is called **bronchitis**.
- 7) A _____on is shaped like a large **ball**.
- 8) _____as is the festival of the birth of **Christ**.
- 9) A birth _____te **certifies** the date of one's birth.

9) Prefixes and Suffixes

Together, these two terms are known as *affixes*. They are small groups of letters which add meaning to an existing root word. Prefixes appear before the root, whereas suffixes (also known as postfixes) go afterwards.

As with knowing the spellings and meanings of the roots themselves, if you also know the same about many common prefixes and suffixes you will find using their related words so much easier.

Micro, for example, is from the Greek *mikros*, meaning very small, or, in science and maths, one millionth. Many words which begin with micro, e.g. microscope and microfilm, micromanage and microsurgery, all share this link. If you therefore know what *micro* means and how it is spelled, you are half way to spelling these words, too.

Exercise 5

Complete the tables below. The first has been done for you as an example and you may use a dictionary to help you if necessary.

Prefix	Meaning	Words	Meanings
post	<i>after</i>	posterior postmortem	Near the rear Examination after death
hyper			
hypo			
inter			
extra			
contra			
tele			

Exercise 5 (continued)

Suffix	Meaning	Words	Meanings
dom			
ness			
esque			
ful			
less			
en			

Exercise 6

Many words to describe people's occupations are formed by adding the suffixes *er*, *or*, *ist* or *cian* to the root word describing their job, e.g. teacher.

Write down as many of professions as you can, again using a dictionary if necessary. Collecting such words together into groups will help you to learn their spellings.

er	or	ist	cian
hairdresser	decorator	florist	optician
miner	actor	chemist	musician

Exercise 7

Match each root in the table with one of the prefixes in the numbered list in order to make 10 new words.

cook	nova	floor	frost	sight
reliable	sane	fix	appear	marine

1. De _____
2. Pre _____
3. Re _____
4. Sub _____
5. Un _____
6. Dis _____
7. In _____
8. Under _____
9. Super _____
10. Over _____

Exercise 8

Match each root in the table with one of the suffixes in the numbered list in order to make 10 new words. *Remember* that some words **alter slightly** when combined with a suffix.

comfort	national	health	fear	picture
outland	mercy	person	commune	maintain

1. _____al
2. _____ish
3. _____ist
4. _____ance
5. _____able
6. _____esque
7. _____less
8. _____ism
9. _____ful
10. _____y

The suffix **ly** is of particular importance, as it is frequently used to turn an adjective (e.g. brisk) into an adverb (e.g. briskly):

- *The trees have been stripped of their leaves by the **brisk** north wind.*
- *The north wind blew **briskly** through the trees, stripping them of their leaves.*

Exercise 9

There are several rules governing the addition of **ly** to the end of a word, though as always there are inevitably exceptions. Nevertheless, try to work out some of the rules from the list of words below. The first has been done as an example.

Adjective**Adverb**

- | | | |
|----|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1) | inexpensive
acute | inexpensively
acutely |
|----|----------------------|--------------------------|

Rule: When an adjective ends in **e** just add **ly**.

- | | | |
|----|---------------|-----------------|
| 2) | dull
smell | dully
smelly |
|----|---------------|-----------------|

Rule:

- | | | |
|----|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 3) | acceptable
memorable | acceptably
memorably |
|----|-------------------------|-------------------------|

Rule:

- | | | |
|----|---------------|-------------------|
| 4) | crazy
wary | crazily
warily |
|----|---------------|-------------------|

Rule:

- | | | |
|----|--------------------|----------------------------|
| 5) | fanatic
cryptic | fanatically
cryptically |
|----|--------------------|----------------------------|

Rule:

Exercise 10

Look at the **ly** words below and try to work out the base word from which they came.

Word	Root Word
finally	
stealthily	
immediately	
practically	
sincerely	
comically	
slyly	
singly	
musically	
solely	
duly	

In the above 11 words there are two exceptions to the rules in Exercise 8. Can you spot which ones they are?

Write them again in the spaces below and explain which of the rules they disobey.

1.

2.

Exercise 11

Add a suitable prefix or suffix to the root word, given in brackets, appropriate to the context of the sentence.

- 1) The injured dog looked a (pity) _____ sight wrapped in bandages.
- 2) We should like to wish you all good health and (happy) _____ in your new home.
- 3) The (fellow) _____ of the Rings is the first novel in Tolkien's trilogy.
- 4) If Sarah fails her test again, it will be the fifth time she has (try) _____.
- 5) The tutor filled in an order form for fifty new (dictionary) _____.
- 6) The losing captain (sporting) _____ shook his opposite number's hand.
- 7) The tyrant ruled the city in a (despot) _____ manner.
- 8) The lout was seen on CCTV (wilful) _____ damaging the flowers.
- 9) The aim of terrorism is to (terror) _____ the general public.
- 10) I make sure that I eat a (nutrition) _____ balanced diet every day.

10) Spelling Rules

Basic spelling relies on knowing the typical *rules* which govern the uses of particular letters.

y to i

When adding a suffix to a word ending in **y**, change it to an **i** unless the suffix itself begins with **i**.

Examples:

- beauty + ful = beautiful
- happy + ness = happiness
- dry + ied = dried

Exceptions:

- hurry + ing = hurrying
- dry + ness = dryness
- shy + ness = shyness
- sly + ly = slyly

In terms of forming **plurals**, if the letter before **y** is a *consonant*, change the **y** to **i** and add **es**:

- dictionary = dictionaries
- cavalry = cavalries
- housefly = houseflies
- gypsy = gypsies

If the letter before **y** is a *vowel*, however, add **s**:

- highway = highways
- survey = surveys
- birthday = birthdays
- ball-boy = ball-boys

ise or ize

The accepted spelling of this suffix has slowly changed so that **ise** is almost always seen as correct these days. *Ize*, however, is not an Americanism; it was in fact the original form in English and was the dominant spelling even as late as the 1880s when the very first Oxford English dictionary appeared. Despite these facts, *ise* has come to dominate, such that the only time you should use **ize** is when there is a word where the two different spellings have two different meanings, e.g.

- prize: (noun) to win a reward
- prise: (verb) to jemmy open

c or s

Apart from remembering that **practise** is a verb, while **ice** is a noun (**practice**), words like these also follow the c for nouns and s for verbs pattern:

Noun	Verb
• licence	license
• practice	practise
• advice	advise

As ever of course, some words don't follow this rule, e.g. defence is a verb and a noun.

Exercise 12

Choose the correct version of the words to complete these sentences.

- 1) I have lost my driving licence/license.
- 2) The pub is licenced/licensed to sell alcohol.
- 3) I practiced/practised a lot when I was younger.
- 4) I must practise/practice my piano lesson.
- 5) I need to visit the licencing/licensing office if I'm going to go fishing in the lakes.
- 6) Would you advice/advise me what to do, please?
- 7) Practicing/Practising your times tables is the best way to learn them.
- 8) The adviser/adviser was early for the meeting.
- 9) The taxi licensor/licencor was off on holiday.
- 10) Let's see you take this under advisement/advicement.

Dropping the final e

If a word ends in a silent **e**, drop it when adding a suffix that starts with a vowel:

- replace - replacing

If a word ends in a silent **e**, keep it when adding a suffix that starts with a consonant:

- replace - replacement

Exercise 13

Observing the above rules, combine the following words with the suffixes given in brackets. Use a dictionary if necessary.

idle (-ness)		grope (-ing)	
excite (-able)		separate (-ing)	
amaze (-ment)		assure (-ance)	
postpone (-ment)		separate (-ly)	
amaze (-ing)		lone (-ly)	
fame (-ous)		white (-ish)	
excite (-ment)		sense (-less)	
spite (-ful)		love (-ing)	

An exception to the above rule is that words ending in **ce** and **ge** keep the **e** when adding **able** or **ous**:

- replace, **replaceable**.
- **courage**, **courageous**

Exercise 14

Bearing this in mind, continue with the following combinations of words and suffixes:

overtake (-ing)		trace (-ing)	
desire (-ous)		advantage (-ous)	
late (-ly)		observe (-ant)	
late (-ish)		true (-ly)	
manage (-able)		notice (-able)	
elope (-ment)		dine (-ing)	
change (-able)		white (-ness)	
outrage (-ous)		replace (-able)	
desire (-able)		nightmare (-ish)	

11) Compound Words

Words such as all, fill, full, till and well are often added to the **end** of other words as **suffixes**, or to the **beginning** of other words as **prefixes**, thus forming a **simple** compound word.

In these cases the double letter **ll** mostly becomes a single:

- **almighty**
- **fulfil**
- **handful**
- **until**
- **welfare**

A few exceptions, however, do occur:

- **farewell**
- **illness**
- **tallness**
- **wellbeing**

able and ible

Both these suffixes can form adjectives which mean *to be able to*, but deciding which to use on any given occasion can be a bit of a minefield. For example, from prevent we get prevent**able**, whereas convert gives us convert**ible**.

The first tip is that there are nearly seven times as many words end in *able* than *ible*, so if you have to make a sheer guess, *able* it is.

The second is that most words that end in *able* tend to be complete on their own, e.g. wear / wear**able** or change / change**able**. In contrast, words ending in *ible* tend to be incomplete by themselves, e.g. compat**ible** or incred**ible** (there are no such words as *compat* or *incred*). This being English, of course, there are exceptions, but in general these *rules* do apply.

The third is that as it reflects historic Latin influences on English, there no new words being made with the suffix *ible*. If it's a modern word, particularly related to technology, e.g. *parsable*, it will always have an *able* ending.

The top 25 most common *ible* words you're likely to need to know are therefore as follows:

accessible	discernible	horrible	incredible	negligible	sensible
audible	edible	impossible	invisible	permissible	susceptible
compatible	eligible	inaccessible	irresistible	plausible	tangible
convertible	feasible	incompatible	irresponsible	possible	terrible
credible	flexible	incomprehensible	mandible	responsible	visible

Exercise 15

Complete the following sentences by adding the correct letter.

- 1) What makes him so irrit a/i ble?
- 2) This is a sens a/i ble suggestion.
- 3) He would make an admir a/i ble prefect.
- 4) Is the disease cur a/i ble?
- 5) Smoking is not permiss a/i ble in this hall.
- 6) Do you think it advis a/i ble for us to go without coats?
- 7) The frost did a neglig a/i ble amount of damage.
- 8) Her stockings are almost invis a/i ble.
- 9) Strong boots are indespens a/i ble for rock climbing.
- 10) She is a very excit a/i ble girl.
- 11) I hold you respons a/i ble for the safe keeping of this book.
- 12) His insulting manner was contempt a/i ble.
- 13) They told us an almost incred a/i ble story of hardship and danger.
- 14) The village is not approach a/i ble from the north.
- 15) The village is easily access a/i ble from the west.
- 16) Is it poss a/i ble for mankind to reach Mars?

Use a dictionary whenever you are not sure of the spelling.

12) Words Commonly Confused

Another kind of spelling *error* is not really a mistake but rather a confusing of words that have a similar sound but different meanings. We have so many of these that confusion is hardly surprising. It is worth remembering that these errors would not be picked up by a word processor's spell check since the *wrong* word actually does exist.

Exercise 16

Use the following words, each in a separate sentence, to show that you clearly understand the difference.

1) accept, except

.....
.....

2) advice, advise

.....
.....

3) draft, draught

.....
.....

4) ensure, insure

.....
.....

5) instance, instants

.....
.....

6) its, it's

.....
.....

7) loose, lose

.....
.....

8) new, knew

.....
.....

9) past, passed

.....
.....

10) practice, practise

.....
.....

11) there, their

.....
.....

12) whose, who's

.....
.....

Exercise 17

Here are fifty unfinished words that cause many people to stumble in their spelling.

Using a dictionary where necessary, complete them correctly.

reco__nise

maint__nance

mis__letoe

sep__rate

cat__pill__r

mant__piece

lib__ary

her__tic

par__lel

prof__sor

sat__lite

asp__rin

campai__n

manoe__vre

laburn__m

lite__ary

vac__um

par__fin

shep__rd

ras__berry

rhod__dendron

parl__ment

rhinocer__s

vet__inary

lunch__on

propel__r

rest__ant

choc__late

dip__theria

sacr__l__gious

uncon__cious

auxil__ary

Feb__uary

substan__ial

lab__rinth

Portug__ese

contempor__y

diaphra__m

mis__aneous

cu__board

pomegran__te

ex__hibition

min__ature

mack__rel

b__oyant